

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Inter-Department Communication

FROM	Steven M. Couture Rivers Coordinator	DATE	September 22, 2008
SUBJECT	Ammonoosuc River Nomination	AT	Environmental Services Watershed Management Bureau
TO	Thomas S. Burack Commissioner		

Pursuant to RSA 483, I have reviewed the Ammonoosuc River Local Advisory Committee's nomination to designate the Ammonoosuc River, Upper Reach (Ammonoosuc River) into the Rivers Management and Protection Program (RMPP). This review was completed in accordance with the criteria outlined in RSA 483:6 for the review of river nominations. Based on my review and on the public comment received regarding the nomination, I am pleased to recommend the Ammonoosuc River for inclusion into the RMPP. My findings are summarized below.

1. Resource Evaluation

The administrative rules for river nominations, promulgated under RSA 483:11, II, establish a point system for assessing the resource values of a nominated river in five different categories. The Ammonoosuc River scored highly in this point system evaluation and was awarded a total of 505 points out of 595 possible points. The points awarded are as follows:

Natural Resource Category

The Ammonoosuc River was awarded 205 points out of a maximum of 205 in this category. From its headwaters on the pristine slopes of Mount Washington to its relief in the Town of Carroll, the Ammonoosuc River has geologic resources of statewide significance within the river corridor. The river supports over thirty endangered and threatened wildlife and plant species of statewide and federal significance including nine plant species and the federally endangered Bald Eagle and state threatened Osprey. Three exemplary natural ecological communities are located within the river corridor and according to the NH Fish and Game Wildlife Action Plan, 64 percent of the watershed area falls within the highest ranked wildlife habitat in NH. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identify the river as an important cold water fishery, there is an ongoing Atlantic salmon restoration effort, and native brook reproduction is present. Water quality currently meets Class B standards, per Env-Wq 1708.05 the drainage area constitutes an Outstanding Resource Water, and the river is largely free-flowing. The majority of the watershed acreage is within the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF).

Managed Resource Category

The Ammonoosuc River was awarded 30 points out of a maximum of 90 in this category. There are no impoundments or hydroelectric facilities. There are three registered water withdrawals from the Ammonoosuc River. Two support activities at the Mount Washington Resort and Bretton Woods Ski Resort and one is for public drinking water. There are two permitted waste water discharge sites on the Upper Reach. The Mount Washington Hotel discharges wastewater via a spray irrigation system and the Bretton Woods Waste Water Treatment Facility returns water to ground water by artificial recharge.

Cultural Resource Category

The Ammonoosuc River was awarded 60 points out of a maximum of 60 in this category. Historical and archaeological resources within the river corridor include five properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic places: the Mount Washington Hotel, the Crawford Family marker, the Mount Washington Hotel marker, Bretton Woods Monetary Conference marker, and the Cog Railway Historic marker. The river is also an important community resource and is discussed extensively in the Town of Carroll's Master Plan. The Town of Carroll's Master Plan lists the Ammonoosuc River as a very significant resource for recreational, wildlife, environmental, economic and scenic purposes.

Recreational Resource Category

The Ammonoosuc River was awarded 120 points out of a maximum of 120 in this category. The N.H. Fish and Game Department stocks the Ammonoosuc River with brook, brown and rainbow trout with the Ammonoosuc River providing excellent habitat for fly fishing. The *AMC River Guide* recognizes the Ammonoosuc River for its intermediate to expert whitewater runs. There are several privately and publicly owned recreation areas in the river corridor. These areas offer a mix of recreational opportunities including hiking, nature study, picnicking, swimming, river access, recreational fields and snowmobile trails. These areas include the Mount Washington Resort and Bretton Woods Ski Resort, which offer skiing, horseback riding, and golf, the Mt. Washington Cog Railway base station, and the WMNF access points at Lower Falls and Upper Falls.

Other Resource Category

The Ammonoosuc River was awarded 90 points out of a maximum of 120 in this category. There are numerous scenic views and vistas including the Presidential Range and Lower Falls in the Town of Carroll, in addition to others that enabled a state Scenic & Cultural Byway and a Federal Scenic Byway designation for portions of Route 302. The natural segment river flows through a pristine forested corridor while the remaining reach flows through a mainly forested corridor and is readily accessible by road in many places. There are sections of the Cog Railway which also fall within the River's corridor. Commercial and residential buildup areas are mainly focused around the Mount Washington Resort and Bretton Woods Ski Resort, with the Town of Carroll adopting a 182 acre Village Overlay District located at the base of Bretton Woods Ski Resort. Downstream of the nominated reach, there is an active U.S. Geological Survey stream gage in Bethlehem.

2. Public Comments

The Rivers Coordinator, in coordination with the Rivers Management Advisory Committee (RMAC), held a public hearing in the Town of Carroll on August 12, 2008 to provide information about the RMPP and to receive public comment on the nomination. Approximately thirty people attended the hearing. The RMAC heard and responded to a variety of questions about the nomination and the RMPP before taking testimony. All of those who testified spoke in support of the designation of the Ammonoosuc River.

To date, the Department has received twenty-one letters of support and petitions for the nomination (see list - page 4). Nine of these letters are from local officials in the Ammonoosuc River watershed, including two from local boards of selectmen, two from planning boards, and five from conservation commissions. Twelve additional endorsements were received from interested organizations and local citizens. There was one letter of opposition and one letter of concern.

The RMAC was impressed with the level of public support demonstrated for the nomination at the public hearing. During their deliberations on the Ammonoosuc River Nomination, a few RMAC members thought it noteworthy that endorsements were received from the Town of Carroll's Board of Selectman, Planning Board, and Conservation Commission.

3. Recommendation

Classification

The RMAC also considered the proposed classification for the Ammonoosuc River during its deliberations on the nomination. The RMAC determined the classifications are appropriate based on the materials presented and the site review.

Based on my review of the resources values associated with the Ammonoosuc River, the level of public support expressed for the nomination, and the deliberations of the RMAC, it is my recommendation that the Ammonoosuc River be designated into the RMPP as follows; this recommendation is consistent with the classification proposed in the nomination for the river and is fully supported by the RMAC:

1. As a natural river from the Lakes of the Clouds in Sargents Purchase to a point 1.33 miles above Upper Falls in Crawford's Purchase (5.5 miles segment);
2. As a rural community river from a point 1.33 miles above Upper Falls in Crawford's Purchase to Lower Falls in the Town of Carroll to (6.6 miles segment).

Future Management

The Ammonoosuc River comparatively high scores in most categories are reflective of the balanced yet pristine character of the Ammonoosuc River corridor. Accordingly, it is my recommendation that the future management of the river seek to recognize its existing managed and recreational resources, while protecting and enhancing its remaining natural, scenic and cultural values.

cc: Katherine W. Peters, Special Assistant for Policy, Governor's Office
Harry Stewart, Director, Water Division, DES (*via electronic mail*)
Paul Currier, Administrator, Watershed Management Bureau, DES (*via electronic mail*)
Steve Couture, Rivers Coordinator, DES (*via electronic mail*)
Charlie Ryan, Chair, Ammonoosuc River Local Advisory Committee (*via electronic mail*)
Leslie Bergum, Ammonoosuc River Local Advisory Committee (*via electronic mail*)
RMAC Members (*via electronic mail*)
LRMAC Chairs (*via electronic mail*)

WRITTEN ENDORSEMENTS FOR THE AMMONOOSUC RIVER NOMINATION

As of September 22, 2008

Endorsements Received

Organization	Subheading
Connecticut River Joint Commissions, Inc.	
Connecticut River Joint Commissions, Inc.	Riverbend Subcommittee
Coos County	Planning Board
NH Audubon	Ammonoosuc Chapter
NH Fish & Game Department	
NH Trout Unlimited Council	
North Country Council, Inc.	
Pemigewasset River Local Advisory Committee	
Riverfront Homeowners Association	
Swift River Local Advisory Committee	
Town of Bath	Office of the Selectmen
Town of Bethlehem	Conservation Commission
Town of Carroll	Office of the Selectmen
Town of Carroll	Planning Board
Town of Carroll	Conservation Commission
Town of Jefferson	Conservation Commission
Town of Littleton	Conservation Commission
Town of Whitefield	Conservation Commission
Trout Unlimited	Ammonoosuc Chapter

Other Endorsements

1. A petition from the Town of Carroll with 44 signatures
2. One letter from an individual

Opposition

1. One letter from an individual

Other

1. One letter of concern from the Mount Washington Resort